

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
other names PG:79-25

**2. Location**

street & number 14825 Pratt Street  not for publication  
city or town Upper Marlboro  vicinity  
state Maryland code MD county Prince George's code 033 zip code 20772

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

2-1-05  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I hereby, certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
  - Determined not eligible for the National Register.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action 3/14/2005

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall (PG:79-25)  
Name of Property

Prince George's County, Maryland  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

African American Historic Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

RELIGION: religious facility

EDUCATION: school

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: weatherboard

\_\_\_\_\_

roof METAL

other

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on files (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Area of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
- ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1892-1954

**Significant Dates**

- 1880: St. Mary's Beneficial Society founded
- 1892: Meeting hall constructed

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

African American

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:  
Prince George's County Planning Department

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall (PG:79-25)  
Name of Property

Prince George's County, Maryland  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.34 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1   8 Zone	3   4   8   2   4   7 Easting	4   2   9   8   0   2   2 Northing	3			
2				4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Betty Bird, Julie Darsie

Organization Betty Bird & Associates date August 2003

street & number 2607 24<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Suite 3 telephone (202) 588-9033

city or town Washington, District of Columbia state N/A zip code 20008

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name Hal C. B. Clagett, III et al.

street & number P.O. Box 1299 telephone (301) 627-5844

city or town Upper Marlboro state Maryland zip code 20773

**Paperwork Reduction Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

PG:79-25  
St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
Name of Property

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Section 7 Page 1

Prince George's County, Maryland  
County and State

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## DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall, constructed in 1892, is located in the bustling county seat of Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland. The lodge building faces west toward the convergence of Pratt Street and Main Street, and is located nearly across the street from St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, with which it is historically associated. The 1-story, wood-frame, front-gable building has a ca. 1930s hipped-roof porch on the west, an original shed-roof wing on the east, and a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century shed restroom addition on the east. The interior of the building was completely gutted and remodeled for a law office in 1988.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
Name of Property

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Prince George's County, Maryland  
County and State

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall is located in the bustling county seat of Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland. The building faces west toward the convergence of Pratt Street and Main Street, and is located nearly across the street from St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, with which it is historically associated. A large public parking lot lies to the south, and a wooded area lies to the east and north. The building stands on a triangular lot and has a small, gravel parking lot to its north. The rest of the lot is wooded. Small sections of recent picket fence and ca. 1950s wrought iron fence protect the porch from oncoming traffic.

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall, constructed in 1892, is a 1-story, wood-frame, front-gable building. It has a brick pier foundation, wood lap siding with cornerboards, and a metal shingle roof with a boxed cornice and returns. A brick chimney rises from the ridge at the east gable end. The main entry is located in the center of the west gable front and consists of 5-panel double doors with a 3-light transom and plain surround. The 6/6 wood windows have plain surrounds and louvered shutters. A ca. 1930s porch extends across the front (west) elevation. The porch has a concrete foundation, a recent brick floor, square chamfered posts, a beadboard ceiling, and a hipped roof. A ca. 1940s box office occupies the south end of the porch. The box office has beadboard wainscoting, lap siding upper walls, a small ticket window (now boarded over) facing north onto the porch, and a full size window facing south. On the east side of the building is a 2-bay shed-roof wing with an original window and 4-panel door facing north. A small pent shelters the door. A smaller shed addition contains the restrooms.

The interior of St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall originally consisted of a large hall, a small room to the east, and two restrooms. The interior was completely gutted and remodeled when a law firm acquired the building in 1988.

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall retains its integrity of location, setting, materials, and workmanship. The building remains in its original location and setting, facing a main street in a small but busy county seat. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, historically associated with the Beneficial Society, is located across the street. Although the interior of the Hall has been adapted to modern use, the materials and workmanship on the exterior remain entirely intact.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
Name of Property

Section 8 Page 1

Prince George's County, Maryland  
County and State

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## SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall, constructed in 1892, is significant for its association with the themes "The end of Reconstruction in Prince George's County, 1872-1896," "*Plessy vs. Ferguson* and the institution of government-sanctioned segregation in Prince George's County, 1896-1916," and "Education for African Americans in Prince George's County, 1896-1954." These themes are set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation for African American Historic Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland. In 1880, African American Roman Catholics founded St. Mary's Beneficial Society to provide for the society welfare of their community. The Hall, an excellent example of an African American multi-purpose building, served as a meeting place, social and political center, and house of worship for African Americans living in a segregated society.

The period of significance, 1892-1954, encompasses the date of construction through the end date of the associated theme, "Education for African Americans in Prince George's County, 1896-1954."

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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
Name of Property

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Prince George's County, Maryland  
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## RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT:

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall was constructed in 1892 by African American members of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Upper Marlboro. The Hall is an excellent example of a multi-purpose building constructed for African Americans. The building served as a meeting place, social and political center, and house of worship for African Americans living in a segregated society.

Even before the Civil War, free African Americans in Upper Marlboro attended St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> After the Civil War freedmen struggled to establish homes and livelihoods. African American churches and societies provided community and support networks. In 1880, with assistance from white parishioner William A. Rhoder, African American members of St. Mary's Church founded St. Mary's Beneficial Society.<sup>2</sup> Founding members included Matthias Simmons, Stephen Perry, James Forbes, and Dominic Quander.<sup>3</sup> The Society purchased a lot across the road from the church in 1887, and the lodge opened in 1892.<sup>4</sup>

St. Mary's Beneficial Society was a combination social service and insurance organization that provided financial assistance and other services to its members. Members between the ages of 16 and 50 paid a \$5.00 membership fee plus monthly dues. A corresponding "Children's Society" for those between the ages of one and 16 collected lower dues. The Society provided sick benefits of \$2.50 a week to its members for up to eight weeks. The Society also provided lump sum payments of \$100 to the families of deceased members. Upon the death of a member, all other members paid one additional dollar to replenish the treasury.<sup>5</sup> The officers of the Society, called "marshals," rode horseback to notify members of illnesses and deaths and helped conduct funerals. Members were required to attend mass on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and to attend all funerals.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Susan G. Pearl, *African-American Heritage Survey*, 86.

<sup>2</sup> A History of the St. Mary Beneficial Society, 1-2. Many freedmen had problems with literacy.

<sup>3</sup> Susan G. Pearl, *African-American Heritage Survey*, 88.

<sup>4</sup> Susan G. Pearl, *African-American Heritage Survey*, 88.

<sup>5</sup> Susan G. Pearl, Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form for St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall; Constitution of St. Mary's Beneficial Society.

<sup>6</sup> A History of the St. Mary Beneficial Society, 3-4.



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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall provided a safe place of assembly for African Americans barred from much of the world by segregation and white hostility. Like most African American lodges, churches, and schools, St. Mary's Hall housed a number of functions. It served not only as a meeting place for the society, but also as social hall, a church for both blacks and whites from 1898 to 1899 (while the present St. Mary's Church was being constructed), a school from 1892-1921, and a rental hall for society events in the African American community.<sup>7</sup>

From the 1890s through ca. 1920, St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall also was the meeting place for Prince George's County Republican Party conventions. Both black and white party members attended meetings at the Hall, one of the only places permitting racially integrated assemblies. (Jim Crow laws had left African American men with extremely few opportunities for political participation, and they were generally relegated to low-level county and state positions.<sup>8</sup>)

St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall was used by the Society until the 1980s, when it was sold to an Upper Marlboro law firm. The law firm restored the exterior of the building.

<sup>7</sup> Susan G. Pearl, *African-American Heritage Survey, 1996*, 88; Bianca Floyd, *Records and Recollections*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Bianca Floyd, *Records and Recollections*, 64-77.

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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
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Prince George's County, Maryland  
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## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Constitution of St. Mary's Beneficial Society of Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Typescript. [Prince George's County Planning Department]

Floyd, Bianca P. *Records and Recollections: Early Black History in Prince George's County, Maryland*. Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1989.

A History of the St. Mary Beneficial Society, Upper Marlboro, Md. Photocopy of handwritten manuscript. [Prince George's County Planning Department]

Pearl, Susan G. *African-American Heritage Survey, 1996*. M-NCPPC, 1996.

----- St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall, Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Maryland Inventory of History Properties Form. Maryland Historical Trust. 1987.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall  
Name of Property

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Prince George's County, Maryland  
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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The National Register boundary for St. Mary's Beneficial Society Hall is identical to that of Prince George's County Tax Map 101, Parcel 170. The boundary encloses 0.34 acres.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The above-described National Register boundary follows the lines of the lot purchased by the St. Mary's Beneficial Society in 1887.